

Supervisor Pam Slater's

# E-Slate electronic newsletter

For the week ending Jan. 11, 2003

## Budget Outline Contains Promise, Concerns

Elected leaders up and down this state knew California's almost \$35 billion shortfall would impact their budgets. To what degree this impact would be was not known until Friday, when Gov. Davis unveiled his draft budget for fiscal year 2003-04.

It appears the governor has listened to some of the concerns voiced by local municipalities that the state cannot get its house into order by passing unfunded mandates onto counties, cities and special districts. According to the governor's outline, municipal government will be responsible for health and human service programs costing \$8 billion. These include assuming full responsibility for mental health, home health-care workers, nursing homes and substance abuse programs.

Gov. Davis is right that in his thinking that local control is the best way to manage these programs. His plan to fund them includes a cent-increase in the state's sales tax, proceeds from the revenue derived from increasing the top tax brackets, and adding a \$1.10 to the sale of each pack of cigarettes. His pledge is to "not short-change counties by maintaining revenue at current levels."

The key word here is "current." Many questions must be answered in the weeks ahead as the Legislature and governor craft the final budget. What happens if the increase in sales tax – San Diego County residents will be paying 8 ¾ cents on the dollar – discourages sales? What happens if more people start purchasing their products online and avoid paying sales tax? What happens if those people who are supposed to supply the revenue in the upper tax brackets move away? In 2000, California had 44,000 residents in the top income brackets who paid \$15 billion; a year later those numbers dropped to 29,000 and \$8 billion.

Will San Diego County be expected to simply "pick up" the costs of these social programs if the revenue does not materialize? Outgoing financial director Tim Gage admitted the budget projections contain an element of "risk" – especially if consumers "retrench," which is another way to say less sales tax revenue.

Another disturbing element in the governor's "share the pain" financial plan is the elimination of the vehicle license fee backfill. Local governments are expected to absorb this \$2.9 billion hit. This county will lose \$184 million in funding, including \$60 million immediately for the loss of vehicle license fee reimbursements the governor has indicated will begin in February. His comment that "the state was very good to counties in the flush times; counties must share in the bad times," dismisses the prudence and conservative budgeting that kept San Diego County fiscally healthy.

With a profound philosophical difference splitting the Legislature, there is no doubt the governor's spending proposal is going to change. His challenge to "all elected officials ... to face reality and balance the books" is valid. What must be prevented is forcing San Diego and the other counties to bear an unreasonable burden in righting the state's fiscal ship.

### HELP ALLEVIATE BLOOD SHORTAGE...

A simple gesture on your behalf can have significant ramifications. San Diego's supply of types O+ and O- blood remain critically short, and now type B+ and type B- have also reached dangerously low levels. High

demand, due to an increase in elective surgeries after the holidays, coupled with higher donor deferrals due to cold and flu symptoms, have kept blood supplies from recovering from the critically low levels reported in late December.

To encourage volunteers to give a pint, the San Diego Blood Bank is giving away a limited edition "Super San Diego" Tshirt to every person who donates through Jan. 17. And giving a pint of your blood can prove to be extremely lucky, too. One donor will receive a pair of Super Bowl tickets! The drawing takes place on Jan. 21.

Anyone at least 17 years old, in good health and weighing at least 110 pounds may be eligible to donate blood. Plenty of fluids and a good meal are recommended before donating. Call the San Diego Blood Bank at (619) 296-6393.

## **IT'S GOING TO BE A BUSY YEAR**

Filling the various committee assignments topped this week's agenda and, I can tell you now, it will be a very busy year! I am honored to serve this year as the Chair Pro Tem of the county Board of Supervisors. Along with this assignment, I was selected to serve on 31 committees – more than any other supervisor this year. These committee assignments cover issues ranging from public safety to environmental protection, from water quality to housing and transportation.

My involvement on these committees represents an opportunity to not only ensure that my constituents have their best interests protected but to provide a voice for a common sense approach to government that will benefit our county and our state as a whole. With so many challenges ahead of us, I look forward to finding solutions that will make San Diego County a better place to work and play.

The following are some of the committees on which I will serve:

### **Board of Supervisors' Committees:**

- Clean Water Subcommittee
- Multiple Habit Conservation Program
- Multiple Species Conservation Program
- Summit on Aging

### **California State Association of Counties Committees:**

- California State Association of Counties (Alternate)
- Housing, Land Use, and Transportation Policy Committee
- Economic Development Policy Committee

### **San Diego Association of Governments:**

- High Speed Rail Task Force
- Shoreline Preservation Committee

### **Others:**

- Criminal Justice Council
- Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve Task Force
- North San Diego County Transit Development Board (Alternate)
- Route 56 Policy Committee
- San Diego Regional Technology Alliance
- San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority
- San Diego County Mental Health Board

- San Diego County Safe Kids Coalition
- San Diego County Water Authority (Alternate)
- Southern California Water Authority

Please let me know how I can better represent your interests on these panels by contacting my office or by leaving a note at my county website at: <http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/cnty/bos/sup3/index.html>.

**AROUND THE DISTRICT...** The numbers are in and San Diego's annual county fair ranks seventh in the United States, according to statistics tracked by Amusement Business magazine. Last year the fair set an attendance record of 1.17 million visitors, making it the largest in California. ... Join me in congratulating Escondido teacher Connie Baumgardt Blackburn, who shared with two colleagues the prestigious California's Teachers of the Year 2003. She has taught kindergarten at Central Elementary for the past 16 years. ... And speaking of education, best wishes go to Joseph Stine of Carlsbad, who was appointed to fill the vacant seat on the board of directors for the San Dieguito Union High School District. Stine was chosen from a tough field of 10 extremely qualified candidates.

**AT THE COUNTY ...** The first agenda of the year was non-controversial as the Board of Supervisors took the following actions:

- The recent wild weather swings leave indigent without adequate shelter. To help provide shelter for the homeless, \$25,000 was earmarked for this year's Cold Weather Shelter voucher program and \$15,000 was provided to the Regional Task Force on Homelessness. These funds supplement the \$250,000 already budgeted to help approximately 1,600 families obtain adequate short-term shelter.
- Established a program for low-income families in East County to help them pay their rents. The board set aside \$1.5 million for the program, which has a three-year limit for receiving assistance. The average month support is estimated to be \$560.
- Ratified proclamation of local emergency for damages caused by the outbreak of Newcastle Disease, which affects the county's chicken and egg industries. Newcastle is an extremely contagious disease; a 1971 outbreak resulted in the destruction of more than 12 million birds nationwide, costing taxpayers \$56 million. San Diego County ranks second in California for egg production. In 1991, growers sold more than \$51 million of poultry and eggs.

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